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CRITICAL MOMENTS
IN THE
HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY
IN CHINA

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Religious motives have played as great a part in the exchange of culture and the introduction of new ideas into the East as they have in Europe and the Western world. The cultural effect upon China of the spread of Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity during the past two thousand years can scarcely be overestimated and they have not been as yet by any means completely evaluated.

Two of the Christian Apostles—Thomas and Bartholomew—are claimed by tradition to have preached the Gospel in India and China. The Chaldean breviary of the Malabar Church declares, "By St. Thomas were the Chinese and the Ethiopians converted to the truth. . . . By St. Thomas hath the Kingdom of Heaven taken unto itself wings and passed even unto China. Arnobius, a Christian writer of the third century, mentions the Seres along with the Medes and Persians as among the "races and nations the most difficult in their manners" whose "flame of human passions" had been subdued by the teachings of Christianity. References to the early spread of this religion are not definite enough, however, to warrant any belief that it spread in China before the seventh century.

The discovery in the year 1625 of the Nestorian Tablet near the city of Sian-fu in Shensi brought to light the first positive proof of the comparatively early introduction of Christianity into China which occurred in the early T'ang period. The inscription on the Tablet mentioned the arrival in the year 635, during the reign of the emperor T'ai Tsung, of the Monk A-lo-pen, who, by imperial permission, began the preaching of the Gospel. Almost thirteen hundred years have passed—one thousand two hundred ninety to be exact—since the undoubted introduction of Christianity into this country. It is clear that during this time there must have been not a few of those moments which Shakespeare describes in his famous lines in Julius Caesar:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.”

To certain of these our attention may well be directed in times like the present.

I.

The history of Christianity falls naturally into four periods, viz., the Assyrian (Nestorian) opening in the seventh century; the Catholic Franciscan, and neo-Assyrian, opening in the thirteenth century; the Catholic Jesuit, opening in the sixteenth century; and the modern Catholic and Protestant, opening in the nineteenth century. The Seventh, the Thirteenth, the Sixteenth, and the Nineteenth centuries are then the periods of great beginnings as far as Christianity in China is concerned. Let us consider briefly the first of these.

The T'ang period, particularly that part of it in which Assyrian Christianity entered China, is one of the most glorious not alone in the history of China but even of the world. Europe was at that time in the middle of an age fittingly described as *Dark*—following the collapse of the Western Roman empire and preceding the development of the Holy Roman Empire founded by Charlemagne. The Neo-Persian empire, the chief seat of the Assyrian Christians, was being attacked and conquered by the Mohammedans; in the very year in which the first Assyrian Christians reached Ch'ang-an, the T'ang capital, the followers of Islam administered a crushing defeat to the Neo-Persians. In China there was internal peace, strength, wealth, and culture. To be sure T'ai Tsung (627-650), the second T'ang ruler, who was on the throne at the time of A-lo-pen's arrival, had purchased peaceful accession by the murder of his two brothers who had been plotting to murder him. In the reign of his father, Tai Tsu, the founder of the dynasty, it had been necessary, in order to maintain peace, to cement with gold an alliance with the Turks but in T'ai Tsung's reign the Turks were weakened by internal division and the T'ang emperor had been able to retake most of China's earlier possessions in Central Asia. In the days of T'ai Tsung and A-lo-pen the boundaries of Persia and China were coterminous, and China's generals were pressing toward the Caspian Sea. The court at Ch'ang-an was the goal of many embassies: a Mohammedan mission arrived in 628—seven years before that of the Assyrian Christians. The Manicheans came also with their Astronomical works. In 635 appeared the Christians, and from time to time other missions from Nepal, Magadha, and even from distant Constantinople. As one writer has remarked, “The moment was indeed an auspicious one for the introduction of the Christian Gospel.” That the moment was auspicious is witnessed by the Nestorian monument itself; this

famous tablet was unearthed near Sian-fu—the old Ch'ang-an—in 1625, after lying in the ground for presumably some seven hundred and eighty years. The inscription reads in part: "And behold there was a highly virtuous man named A-lo-pen in the Kingdom of Ta-Ch'in. Auguring (of the Sage, *i.e.* Emperor) from the azure sky, he decided to carry the true Sutras (of the True Way) with him, and observing the course of the winds, he made his way (to China) through difficulties and perils. Thus in the Ninth year of the period named Cheng-kuan A. D. 635 he arrived at Ch'ang-an. The Emperor despatched his Minister, Duke Fang Hsuan-ling, with a guard of honour, to the western suburb to meet the visitor and conduct him to the Palace. The Sutras (Scriptures) were translated in the Imperial Library. (His Majesty) investigated 'The Way' in his own Forbidden apartments, and being deeply convinced of its correctness and truth, he gave special orders for its propagation."* The evidence of this inscription is confirmed by a second document, a small roll of paper found by M. Paul Pelliot in the year 1908, in a cave near Tun-Huang. This reads in part: "I carefully note with regard to the complete list of religious books that the whole number of books of the Mother Church of Syria is 530, all written in Sanskrit on *patra* leaves. In the ninth Cheng-kuan year (A. D. 635), in the reign of the Emperor T'ai Tsung of the T'ang dynasty, the Western monk of great virtue, A-lo-pen, reached Chung Hsia (China) and presented a petition to the Emperor in his native language. Fang Hsuan-ling and Wei Cheng interpreted the petition. Afterwards, by Imperial order, the monk of great virtue, Ching-ching, of our Church, obtained the above thirty works.†

It is clear from these statements that the first period of the propagation of the Gospel in China was not a difficult one for these Christian missionaries from Western Asia. The historic tablet was erected in the year 781. On this it was stated that "the great emperor Kao Tsung (650-683) . . . (had) caused monasteries of the Luminous Religion to be founded in every prefecture. Accordingly, he honoured A-lo-pen by conferring on him the office of the Great Patron and Spiritual Lord of the Empire. The Law (of the Luminous Religion) spread throughout the ten provinces, and the empire enjoyed great peace and concord. Monasteries were built in many cities, whilst every family enjoyed the great blessings (of Salvation).‡

There came a tide, however, in the affairs of the Assyrian Christians in China which they unhappily, in the words of Shakespeare, "omitted" with the result that "all the voyage of their

*P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China* (London, 1915), p. 165.

†Quoted by A. C. Moule, *The Failure of Early Christian Missions to China, In The East and The West*, Vol. 12 (1914), p. 387.

‡Saeki, *op. cit.* p. 167.

*Saeki, *op. cit.* p. 167.

life was bound in shallows and in miseries." The precise time of this is not, and probably never will be, known—nor whether the error of the T'ang Christians was of a positive or a negative sort, that is to say whether the fault, for fault there certainly was, consisted in a failure on their part to do what they ought to have done or in doing what they ought not to have done. Suffice it to say that the Sun of Assyrian Christianity after a brilliant rising in the seventh century disappeared in a cloud of the ninth century so dense that no traces of Christianity as such are to be found in China during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The conclusion of any meteoric career, be it of an individual or of an institution, must ever be of intense interest. Men ask the reason of failure following close on conspicuous success; so it is in the case of the collapse and disappearance of Assyrian Christianity in China under the T'ang dynasty.

Many reasons have been advanced but none that is entirely satisfactory. The Japanese scholar, Saeki, describes these missionaries as standing "before the Emperors of China as the Apostles stood before the Roman governors, whilst the Nestorians, like the Hebrew prophet, Daniel, and the monks of the West in the sub-apostolic age, were the trusted advisers of the Chinese and possibly Japanese Sovereigns!"* Such being the case, why did not Christianity survive in China as it did under the severest of persecutions in the West? To be sure we are told in the inscription on the tablet that at the close of the seventh century "the Buddhists, taking advantage of these circumstances (*i.e.* the building of monasteries in many cities) exercised a great influence (over the Empress Wu) and raised their voices (against the Luminous Religion) in the Eastern Chou, and at the end of the Hsien-t'ien period (712 A. D.) some inferior (Taoist) scholars ridiculed and derided it, slandering and speaking against it in the Western Hao." But it is shown at once that co-operation on the part of "eminent priests who had forsaken all worldly interests" succeeded in "restoring the great fundamental principles and united together to re-bind the broken ties," and in the next reign (Hsuan-Tsung, 712-755.) imperial favor was as great as under T'ai-Tsung. In 845—just two hundred ten years after the introduction of the religion into the country—a great religious persecution broke out. This was aimed especially at the Buddhists, but the Christians also suffered. The emperor Wu Tsung (841-846) decreed that the Buddhist monks and nuns to the number of two hundred thousand should leave the religious and return to secular life, and that the Christian and other foreign monks—in numbers between two and three thousand—should also return to secular life. This persecution was serious but it must be remembered that the Christians suffered many persecutions under the Roman emperors before Constantine was converted to the Faith.

*Saeki, *op. cit.* p. 157.

Into the details of the various theories as to what actually became of the T'ang dynasty Christians it is not necessary to enter here: it is quite possible that some of them became Buddhists, and that both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism has been profoundly affected by eastern Christianity; it is equally possible that others of these Christians became Mohammedans and continued monotheistic, but not Christian, worship; it is possible also that certain powerful secret societies, such as the *Chin Tan Chiao* and the *Pai Lien Chiao* preserve remnants of the ritual and faith of the Assyrian Christians. It may be, Saeki supposes, that the failure of these Christians was due to the fact "that they did not raise up native workers"—that as "foreign missionaries (they) relied on themselves too much"; also that "they were cut off from the main stream of the Church after the tenth century; at least they were not reinforced from the main body after the rise of Mohammedanism." It may be also that "the missionaries relied too much upon Imperial favor" and that "they died or were smothered under too much favor from principalities and powers as a state religion so often is".—All of these are interesting and even plausible explanations of the failure, or at least temporary extinction, of the Assyrian Church in China.

Of the reasons suggested those which seem of most significance have to do with the apparent swallowing up of the Christian body by the Mohammedans and Buddhists. The author of the inscription on the Sian-fu tablet was one King-ting, or Ching-ching, a Persian priest otherwise designated Adam. Now, in a Buddhist work published a few years after the erection of the Nestorian tablet, it has been discovered by a modern Japanese scholar that the Christian priest Adam collaborated with an Indian Buddhist monk, named Prejna, in the translation of a Buddhist Sutra—and received an imperial snub for his pains. "The Emperor (Te-Tsung, A. D. 780-804), who was intelligent, wise and accomplished, who revered the canon of the Shakya, examined what they had translated, and found that the principles contained in it were obscure and the wording was diffuse. Moreover, the Sangharama (monastery) of the Shakya and the monastery of Ta-ts'in (Syria) differing much in their customs, and their religious practices being entirely opposed to each other, King-ting (Adam) handed down the teaching of Mishi-ho (Messiah), while the Shakyaputriya-Sramans propagated the Sutras of the Buddha. It is to be wished that the boundaries of the doctrines may be kept distinct, and their followers may not intermingle. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy are different things, just as the rivers King and Wei have a different course."* This not altogether successful collaboration on the part of the Christian and Buddhist monks occurred at some time after the erection of the Nestorian tablet in 781. The inscription on the tablet itself shows moreover a strange tendency

*Saeki, op. cit. pp. 72-73; cf. also Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* (London 1915) Vol. 1, note on pp. 112-113.

toward confusing Christianity with Buddhism and Taoism: "the Cross is placed at the head of the Monument it is true, but it has the Buddhist emblem of the Lotus and the Taoist emblem of the Cloud beside it, as though to suggest that the three religions are one in essence. The inscription, however, elegant in style, is very inadequate as a statement of Christian doctrine, to our view; it is full of Buddhist, Confucianist, and Taoist terms, and singularly deficient in Christian ones, and the ideas of all four cults are mixed, one might say confused, together."*

Of all the reasons suggested for the failure of Assyrian or Nestorian Christianity in China it appears to us that this last is the most significant; nevertheless it must be admitted that all of these take us as far, and as far only, as the statement earlier made that there was a tide which the T'ang Christians omitted and that the result was that "all the voyage of their life was bound in shallows, and in miseries."

II.

Notwithstanding its failure in China Proper, Christianity continued to spread among the nomad Tartars of Central Asia, and when, in the middle of the thirteenth century, the Mongol Kublai Khan became ruler of the Middle Kingdom these eastern Christians again became numerous and influential. Kublai Khan was as catholic minded as had been T'ang T'ai-Tsung of the seventh century. He was friendly to Christianity, to Judaism, to Mohammedanism, and to Buddhism; personally he leaned rather toward Buddhism, but he was more than willing,—he was anxious—that his subjects should be converted to Christianity. There is little doubt that the mother of Kublai Khan, who was a niece of Ung Khan, chief of the Kerait tribe of Mongols, was a Christian. This, taken in conjunction with that great ruler's desire to civilize and spread culture among his followers, appears largely to explain another crucial moment in the history of Christianity in eastern Asia.

While the Mongols were building up their power in Central Asia, immediately prior to the founding of the Yuan dynasty in China, several unsuccessful attempts were made by missionaries of the Church of Rome to reach China by the overland route. Among these were John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruquis. Both were Franciscans who reached the Mongol court at or near Karaborum about the middle of the thirteenth century, but who failed to reach China. Contemporaries of these travellers were the brothers Niccolo and Matteo Polo, merchants of Venice, who, about the year 1265 reached the court of Kublai Khan. Pleased with their personality and hopeful of obtaining help from the Christians of

*Mrs. Samuel Couling, *The Luminous Religion, In The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. LV, No. 5, (May 1924) p. 315.

the West, the Great Khan sent them back to Europe with letters to the Pope "indited in the Tartar tongue." Says Marco Polo himself: "Now the contents of the letter were to this purport: He begged that the Pope would send as many as an hundred persons of our Christian faith; intelligent men, acquainted with the Seven Arts, well qualified to enter into controversy, and able clearly to prove by force of argument to idolaters and other kinds of folk, that the Law of Christ was best, and that all other religions were false and naught; and that if they would prove this, he and all under him would become Christians and the Church's liege-men. Finally he charged his Envoys to bring back to him some Oil of the Lamp which burns on the sepulchre of our Lord at Jerusalem."*

After a three years' journey the brothers Polo reached Acre in Syria in April 1269, only to learn that there was a papal interregnum; Pope Clement IV had died in the preceding November and, owing to ecclesiastical politics, his successor, Gregory X, was not elected until almost three years later. Although the new Pope considered the Great Khan's request for missionaries "to be of great honour and advantage for the whole of Christendom" he was nevertheless able to send only two Preaching Friars with them on their return journey, and these friars, after they had started and had heard of the dangers of the journey, "were greatly frightened, and said that go they never would"—and they did not. Thus a unique opportunity to spread the Christian religion in China was irretrievably lost.

The Polos after serving Kublai Khan many years in China at length left their patron to return to Venice by way of the sea-route probably early in the year 1292. Three years before this Pope Nicholas IV, ambitious for the expansion of Christianity and the Church, had sent the Franciscan monk, John of Monte Corvino, who had already served some nine years in Persia, to labor among the Chinese and Mongols. It is possible that the Polos and John of Monte Corvino met in India; in any case the latter arrived in China within two years of the departure of the Polos. His labors constituted the first successful attempt on the part of European Christians to evangelize China. For some thirty-five years this indefatigable missionary worked in the capital of China where he established two large churches with a membership of several thousand. In the year 1307, Friar John became first Arch-bishop of Peking, and thenceforward he had assistant bishops and friars to aid in his great work.

Reference has been made above to the presence in China in considerable numbers of Nestorian Christians, the great majority of whom must have been Mongols and not Chinese. William of

*The Book of Ser Marco Polo, Yule-Cordier edition (London, 1921) Vol. 1, pp. 13-14.

Rubruquis who had failed to reach China had come into touch with the Assyrian Christians of Central Asia a generation before the arrival in Peking of John of Monte Corvino. William was, on the whole, a fairminded and judicious writer; he describes the Nestorians as knowing nothing. "They say their offices, and have sacred books in Syrian but they do not know the language, so they chant like some monks among us who do not know grammar, and they are absolutely depraved. In the first place they are usurers and drunkards; some of them who live with the Tartars have several wives like them. When they enter the church they wash their lower parts like Saracens; they eat meat on Friday, and have their feasts on that day in Saracen fashion. The bishop rarely visits these parts, hardly once in fifty years. When he does they have all the male children, even those in the cradle, ordained priests, so nearly all the males, among them are priests. Then they marry which is clearly against the statutes of the fathers, and they are bigamists, for when the first wife dies these priests take another. They are simoniacs and administer no sacrament gratis. They are solicitous for their wives and children, and are consequently more intent on the increase of their wealth than of the faith." To be sure William of Rubruquis was a Catholic and, consequently, unlikely to be biassed in favor of the eastern Christians; but it should be remembered that the Catholic writers have as a rule been less critical of the Nestorians than have the Protestants. Had the leaders of these two branches of Christianity in China followed the command of the Founder of their religion that they love one another and that they may be one even as the Father and the Son are one, and had Christianity survived among them in its pristine purity, it is impossible to imagine a limit to what *might* have been accomplished by Christianity in China and Asia as a whole. That something of this was felt by the Archbishop of Soltania who wrote a book about the year 1330, entitled *The Estate and Governance of the Grand Caan* is shown in his statement that "it is believed that if they (the Nestorians) would agree and be at one with the Minor Friars and with the other good Christians who dwell in that country, they would convert the whole country, and the emperor likewise to the true faith." But instead of co-operation in maintaining and spreading a religion pure and undefiled, we find mutual antagonisms and "persecutions of the sharpest" on the part of the Nestorians directed against Archbishop John of Monte Corvino, especially in the early years of his residence in Peking. There were Nestorian bishoprics at Peking (or Khanbaliq) and at Ning-hsia on the Yellow River. The Nestorians did not relish the founding of a Catholic bishopric within their preserve at the national capital. The great Catholic missionary was "many a time . . . dragged before the judgement seat with ignominy and

threats of death.”*—But persecution far from discouraging him spurred him on to greater efforts, with the result that Khanbaliq became a metropolitan bishopric of the Catholic Church, and thousands were converted within the city itself and its environs. Nor was the work of the devoted Franciscans limited to the north; with the coming of others, stations were opened in other centres which prospered till well past the middle of the fourteenth century—until the Yuan, or Mongol, dynasty weakened to its fall.

Many thousands were converted to Catholic Christianity, schools were built, Friars from Europe kept in touch with the home base in Rome—and still this great mission proved a failure. Why? What tide was now omitted by the Christians which involved them in shallows and in miseries? The clearest analysis of this problem which the writer has seen is that by the Rev. A. C. Moule, sometime a missionary of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel in the province of Shantung. This scholar shows that the work of the second great Christian period was so closely bound up with foreigners of two divisions, namely the foreign Catholic missionaries themselves and the Mongol conquerors of China, that the Church was unable to survive the expulsion of the Mongols and the establishment of a native dynasty, the Ming.

Foreignism and anti-foreignism are terms of which we hear much at the present time. Foreignism is, in the mind of the writer just mentioned, “a malady which attacks most missionaries in China still. The early Jesuits, we are told by one of themselves, ‘measured everything with a foreign rule.’ They tried to foreignize the Chinese, or at least they remained obstinately foreign themselves. In those early dangerous days they cheerfully built themselves a house in European style, a thing that has caused trouble again and again within quite recent years. The early and later Nestorians . . . even . . . seem to have kept their Syriac services to the end . . . and the Italian John of Monte Corvino set to work teaching little boys *Latin*; and in his tremendous solitude—twelve years without a letter or message from Europe—it was evidently his greatest joy that they sang the services *just the same as in his convent at home*. . . . But the Later Nestorians and the Franciscans . . . were regarded as part of the hated foreign rule of the Mongols. Khubilai had conquered China by force of arms and held it, he and his successors, with difficulty for less than ninety years. Their policy was to give the Chinese no power. All the higher officials throughout the land were foreigners— . . . the country was in a sense overrun with foreign officials, soldiers, merchants,

*Yule, Cathay, op. cit. Vol. III, p. 46.

W. W. Rockhill, *The Journeys of William of Rubreck and John de Carpine* (Hokhey Society, 1900), p. 158—Quoted by A. R. Rowbotham, *The Earliest Days of Christianity in China* *In The Chinese Recorder*, Jan. 1923.

priests, all inevitably associated together, in the minds of the subject Chinese, as part of the foreign conqueror's detested rule. And, when the time came, all at once they went."* How many of the converts of Archbishop John and his assistants were Chinese—in distinction to the Mongol converts—we cannot say. Apparently the number was not great, but great or small with the fall of the Yuan dynasty, Christianity was weakened and its believers were again left in shallows and in miseries.

III.

The third great phase of Christianity in China begins with the ardent desire of St. Francis Xavier to open work in this country, and his arrival on the island of Shangchuen, or St. John's Island, off the southern coast of China in the year 1552. Because of the opposition of the Portuguese who feared that trouble with the imperial authorities, which would interfere with commerce, might be created by the opening of religious work, St. Francis was prevented from landing on the mainland, and died on the island within sight of the goal of his desires. Not the first member of the Society of Jesus to reach the mainland, but the most influential of the group of early and great Jesuits whose labors dominate the third great Christian period in China (1552-1744), was the Italian, Matteo Ricci.

A momentous decision in the history of Christianity in the Far East was that of Ricci when he determined to appeal to the imperial court and the leading officials through the intellect, that is to say, through literary and scientific channels. In 1601 the zealous and subtle Italian priest was presented to the Ming emperor Shen Tsung (Wan Li, 1573-1619). To him Ricci was able to offer gifts which included pictures of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, an harpsicon, and a clock which would strike. So pleasing was the effect of Ricci upon the emperor that the favor of the latter was exerted to the extent of contributing to the support of Ricci and his companions, and permitting them to rent a house. For nine years Ricci labored in the capital despite all protests on the part of the Board of Rites. He delved deeply into the classical lore, mastered the language and used it as a medium for acquainting the Chinese officials and *literati* with the progress of Western lands, their science and religion. The courtliness and erudition displayed by the early Jesuits in conjunction with their learned publications impressed the imperial courts as nothing else could have done, and two hundred conversions were reported within four years including those of three famous scholars who collaborated with Ricci in the translation of Euclid, Aristotle, and other Western authors and who produced original works in mathematics, the sciences and the arts. When

*The Failure of Early Christian Missions to China, *In The East and The West*, Vol. 12 (1914), pp. 383-410.

Ricci died in 1610, the emperor gave land for his burial place outside the city wall—land which was the first ecclesiastical property acquired in China by the missionaries of this era.

Twenty years after the death of Ricci, a German Jesuit, Adam Schaal, became more influential even than his great precursor. In the meantime there had been a persecution of the missionaries and their converts consequent upon the enmity of the Board of Rites; the friendship of certain scholars—officials who had been converted by Ricci—in conjunction with the knowledge along scientific lines displayed by the priests themselves, saved their work and, by 1622, the imperial edict against them had been revoked. The last Ming emperor to rule in Peking, Szu Tsung (Ch'ung Cheng, 1628-1643) appointed Adam Schaal and Jacques Rho to the Astronomical Board about 1630. Some thirty mission stations in thirteen provinces witness to the labor of those Jesuits who were scattered through the country and whose interests were protected by their confreres at the court of Peking.

Schaal who had shown that he was acquainted with the process of making cannon, was ordered by the emperor to aid the dynasty by casting cannon to use against the Tartars. The priest did not feel that it was in keeping with his profession to do this but, rather than risk the position of the Jesuits at court, he established a foundry and succeeded in casting twenty cannon most of which could throw a forty-pound shot. In connection with the question of conscience involved, it is interesting to note that in 1674, on the occasion of the rebellion of Wu San-kuei against the Manchus, Pere Verbiest was commanded by K'ang Hsi to follow the precedent established by Schaael. In obeying the imperial command Verbiest was criticised by enemies of the Jesuits in Europe, but the Pope commended him for having "used the profane sciences for the safety of the people and the advancement of the Faith."*

In 1644 Schaal was on the staff of the Ming army against the Manchu invaders. That year was a critical one in the history of Christianity in China, as well as in the political and military history of China itself. Was the work of the Catholic Christians established by Ricci and expanded by his successors now to be destroyed as had been that of the earlier Franciscans who had followed the lead of Archbishop John of Monte Corvino in the last days of the Mongols? But—the Jesuits were as shrewd in statecraft as they were zealous in propagating the faith; they ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds. The Manchu conquerors, anxious to stabilize their position in China, were glad to retain the services of intellectuals of the ability of Schaal, and Schaal and his companions in

*Huc, *Le Christianisme en Chine* Tome III, p. 89, quoted by A. H. Rowbotham, *The Jesuits at the Court of Peking, In The Chinese Social and Political Science Review (Peking)* Vol. V, No. 4 (Dec. 1919), p. 309.

the north, who never forgot their position at the Ming court was for a great purpose, saw every reason for continuing their work at the Manchu court while their colleagues in the south where, in Kwangtung and Kiangsi, the Mings were for a time able to repulse the Manchus, continued loyally to support the last Ming pretender to the imperial throne. Schaal in Peking was appointed by the Manchus to the Board of Astronomy or Mathematics. His position at the court continued to strengthen his religious propaganda and it is said that before long he had twelve thousand converts.

In the meantime two other Jesuits, the Austrian Koffler, and the Pole Boym, continued to support the Mings. It is reported that before their fall from power more than one hundred forty of the imperial clan, including the widow of Szu Tsung's predecessor, had been baptised. The mother, wife, and son of the pretender Yung Lieh, were baptised and as a last resort it was decided that an embassy asking assistance should be sent to the Pope and to the Catholic princes of Europe. Boym travelling by sea and land reached Venice at the end of the year 1652; at this time the Jesuits were proscribed in Venice and the ambassador had been ordered by his superiors to apply to the French Minister in Venice: this inaugurated the claim of France to a Protectorate over the Roman Catholic missions of the Far East in imitation of her Protectorate over the Christians in the Mohammedan East—another moment in the history of Christianity in China which is highly significant if not precisely critical. Boym and a Chinese official, who had joined him, were received in audience by the Doge and Senate of Venice. They then journeyed on to Rome where they were graciously received by Pope Alexander VII, who, however, was unable to send any aid of a material nature. Here we are reminded of an earlier failure in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Had the Portuguese in Macao or the Pope and Catholic princes of Europe been able to send help to the Mings not only the secular but the spiritual history of China would have been quite different.

Adam Schaal was succeeded in Peking by the Belgian Jesuit Verbiest who rose high in the favor of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722). The latter first severely tested his knowledge of mathematics and then made him Director of the Observatory. Verbiest wrote many books introducing into China the scientific knowledge of Europe; like Schaal, as mentioned previously, he cast cannon for his imperial master. Verbiest was followed by the French Jesuit Gerbillon, who, with the Portuguese Jesuit Pereira, was sent to act on behalf of China in negotiating with Russia the first treaty which China signed with a European power, that of Nertschinsk in 1689. His success on this mission was rewarded by the publication on March 22, 1692, of the famous imperial edict of toleration which permitted the preaching of Christianity without restraint through out the empire. Gerbillon himself was appointed to the Presidency of the Board of Mathematics. Five years later K'ang Hsi sent a member of the Society of Jesus to

Rome with gifts, and with permission to bring back from France more Christian workers. In 1699 Gerbillon received the crowning encouragement to his Faith—K'ang Hsi granted him permission to build a church within the walls of the Forbidden City itself, and is even reported to have contributed to this laudable enterprise from the imperial exchequer. "Moreover, when, in 1704, floods devastated Shantung, the Emperor, disgusted with the graft shown by his mandarins, turned all the relief work over into the control of the Jesuits."* Surely the Christian Church never had brighter prospects in China than at the opening of the eighteenth century. Never have bright hopes for spiritual conquest been dashed lower by the error of mortal man.

As early as 1631, Dominican priests had begun work in the province of Fukien. Shortly afterward the Franciscans reopened work in China in the same province. The tactics of Christian propaganda followed by the Jesuits stirred up bitter criticism on the part of the Dominicans and Franciscans who accused the Jesuits of compromising Christianity by their attitude toward Buddhism, Confucianism, and native customs. There ensued the Rites Controversy which raged in China and in Rome with most unchristian bitterness from 1635 to 1716, and which, however necessary it may or may not have been, resulted in the wrecking of Christianity in China in the third period of its propagation. Briefly this epoch-making dispute among the teachers of this religion in China had to do with the translation into the Chinese language of the term God, and the permission given by the Jesuits to Christians to continue the performance of ancestral and Confucian honors in accordance with the customs of their country. The Rites Controversy, like most of the problems which have caused dispute between East and West, must be studied ultimately as a problem in racial and national psychology. No one who has pondered the rise and fall of Assyrian Christianity in this country can deny that the question of determining the correct character in Chinese for the concept of the One Supreme Being, and of deciding whether the honors paid to ancestors and to Confucius were religious or only civil in their significance, were vital questions, and that upon their correct solution depended the future of Christianity in China. The *method* of arriving at their solution formed, however, the crux of the matter, and it was here that a vital error was made which again entailed the Church in shallows and in miseries. The critics of the Jesuits appealed to Rome; the Jesuits appealed to Peking. Rome decided one way; Peking, in the person of K'ang Hsi, decided the other. It is clear that the Jesuits were ultimately under the spiritual authority of the Pope who would accept with as little equanimity the decision of an Asiatic ruler in the spiritual sphere as had his predecessors certain decisions of European

*H. W. Hering, A Study of Roman Catholic Missions in China—1692-1744. In The New China Review, Vol. 3 (1921), p. 111.

emperors and kings; it is equally clear that an Asiatic monarch of the power and calibre of K'ang Hsi the Great would not bow before the decision of a foreign priest who had never been in China and who could not possibly decide linguistic and social disputes on a basis of first-hand information. On each side there was pride based on a sincere belief in unique and absolute power. Neither could gauge the mind of the other inasmuch as standards for such did not exist. The Chinese and Manchus were shocked and irritated at the dispute among these Christians who preached a doctrine of Love but who were unable apparently to live and work together in peace and amity.

K'ang Hsi did not intend to permit his empire to be split over religious or theological disputes among men from outlandish kindoms; receiving in audience Bishop Maigrot, the Vicar-Apostolic of Fukien, in 1706 he said: "We honour Confucius as our master thereby testifying our gratitude for the doctrine he has left us. We do not pray before the tablets of Confucius or of our ancestors for honour or happiness. These are the three points upon which you contend. If these opinions are not to your taste, consider that you must leave my empire. Those who have already embraced your religion, perceiving the perpetual conflicts that reign amongst you, begin to doubt its truth, and the others are rendered every day less disposed to embrace it. For myself I consider you to be persons who are come to China not to found or to establish your religion, but to break down and destroy it. If it should come to nothing you can only impute it to yourselves."*

Second only to the Rites Controversy, and, indeed, closely connected with it, were the national differences among the Christian missionaries themselves and their relations to the rulers of their homelands. The right of patronage of Catholic missions in China bestowed by the Papacy upon the Portuguese monarchy, and the aid given by Louis XIV of France in founding the French Jesuit Mission in Peking, caused considerable confusion in the religious work itself and served to arouse suspicion of the motives of the missionaries in the minds of K'ang Hsi, Yung Cheng, and Ch'ien Lung. During the course of the Rites Controversy K'ang Hsi attempted to unite the French and Portuguese Jesuits in Peking into one Society—but failed. When he desired to avail himself of the scientific knowledge of the Jesuits in the making of a map of his empire he did not permit them personally to make the surveys of the frontiers. In *The Reflections of K'ang Hsi* the great emperor cautions his successors in reference to the aims of the Europeans, evidently having in mind the missionaries as their advance guard—"They succeed in whatever they undertake, no matter what the difficulty; they are dauntless, clever, and overlook no opportunity. While I rule there is

*R. C. Jenkins, *The Jesuits in China and the Legation of Cardinal de Tournon* (London, 1894), p. 92—Quoted by H. W. Hering op. cit. p. 111-112.

nothing for China to fear from them. I treat them well; they are fond of me and seek my pleasure . . . but if our rule should weaken, if we become careless of the Chinese of the southern provinces . . . what will become of our empire?"

Barely had a year passed after the death of K'ang Hsi when his successor, Yung Cheng, issued the edict of 1724 proscribing Christianity throughout the empire, and confiscating the property of the Church. Because of their scientific knowledge the Peking missionaries might remain, but all others were to be banished to Macao.* Thus did the son of K'ang Hsi evince his fear of the missionaries in the provinces; and every action taken by the Jesuits in Peking, by the Pope in Rome in 1725 and by the ambassador of the king of Portugal sent to Yung Chen in 1727 to obtain the rescinding of the decree so that the missionaries might continue their labors in the interior, served as oil on the flames of imperial opposition. To the memorial of Pope Benedict XIII, Yung Cheng replied, "I cannot permit missionaries to live in the provinces. Why does your pope wish them to be in the provinces? If I sent Bonzes to Europe, how would you treat them? As fanatic disturbers of the peace and public mind deserve." When the missionaries at court proved unremitting in their entreaties for their associates to be permitted to return to the interior the emperor threatened them with expulsion.

In 1730 in the province of Fukien a severe persecution of Christianity began; after a lull it broke out again in 1741, and by 1747 it had spread throughout the empire. Three years earlier—in 1744—the Papal Bull *Ex quo singulare* was published in China. This arbitrarily ended the Rites Controversy which had been begun by the appeal to Rome in 1635. The Bull positively forbade adherence to the earlier Jesuit and the imperial interpretation of the Rites, and required unreserved obedience on the part of all Catholic missionaries and converts to the papal interpretation. With proscription by the emperor and persecution by the officials the masses naturally turned against Christianity. Not all of the priests left the country; some of them returned secretly to their districts in the interior; and, of course, the religion itself did not entirely die out—it was far too deeply rooted for that. But for almost one hundred years it dwindled under persecution and suffered greatly until a new era opened in the nineteenth century.

IV.

The tardiness of Protestant Christians in obeying the Great Command to "Go and make disciples of all the nations" has often been commented upon in the modern period of missionary endeavor. It was not until 1807 that Dr. Robert Morrison, the first of the

*Changed later to Canton, but reordered by imperial decree in 1732.

Protestant missionaries to China reached Canton—eleven hundred seventytwo years after the arrival of A-lo-pen in Ch'ang-an. The opposition of the Portuguese traders in Macao to the opening of religious work by St. Francis Xavier and his successors is, perhaps, easier for us to understand when we bear in mind that approximately two and a half centuries later the opposition of British commercial interests in China made it impossible for Morrison to embark for this country in an East India Company ship, thus forcing him to cross to New York, whence he sailed on an American ship for Canton. Morrison brought with him a letter of introduction from James Madison, then Secretary of State, not to the British agents in Canton but to the American consul. This letter requested Consul Carrington to do all that he could for Morrison consistent with the interests of his own country. The latter provided refuge and entertainment in his own factory and for months Morrison who dared not acknowledge his British citizenship was known as an American. Later, as is of course well known, Morrison found employment under, and received aid from, the East India Company.* That the arrival of Morrison constituted a vital moment in the history of China and of Christianity in China is evidenced by the reported reply of a high official of the Republic of China who, when asked the origin of the revolutionary movement which overthrew the Manchus in 1911, replied that this movement in reality began on the day that Robert Morrison landed in Canton.

Despite the significance of the arrival of Morrison in this country, and that of the dozen or so Anglican and Protestant missionary societies whose members followed in his footsteps, it was not the Protestants who finally brought about the nullification of Yung Cheng's edict of 1724. It was the Catholics whose disputes had caused its publication, and it was a Roman Catholic envoy, M. de Lagrene, from King Louis Philippe of France, who succeeded in obtaining its nullification in the years 1844-1846. The interest of Louis XIV in Catholic missions in China had been felt by his successors, interrupted though it had been during the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. The patient faith and persevering labors of the missionaries were a source of encouragement to the French Catholics at home and resulted in aid which opened new fields of labor to them in China itself. "Let us," said a French writer, who apparently accompanied M. de Lagrene in 1844, "in our policy and our commerce imitate the conduct, at once prudent and courageous, of the Catholic missions, which have for more than two centuries exerted such noble efforts in the cause of religion. Protected and proscribed, honored and persecuted by turns, raised today to the dignities of the imperial court to be thrown into prison or conducted to execution tomorrow, the missionaries persevered in their glorious task, without being for a moment dazzled by the prospects of a pre-

*Cf. Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia* (New York, 1922), p. 64.

carious favour, or cast down by the inflictions of the most fearful hostility. . . . Their progress is slow, but this has not damped their hopes. The faith advances by insensible degrees, but it never recedes. God only knows how many years or how many centuries, how much devotion, and how much martyrdom may be required to complete the work."

In response to the representations of M. de Lagrene, the emperor Tao Kwang at the end of December 1844, issued a rescript granting toleration to Christianity, and stating that "all natives and foreigners without distinction, who learn and practise the religion of the Lord of Heaven (*i.e.*) Roman Catholicism), and do not and do not excite trouble by improper conduct (may) be exempted from the charge of criminality. . . . As to those of the French and other foreign nations, who practise the religion, let them only be permitted to build Churches at the five ports opened for commercial intercourse.* They must not presume to enter the country to propagate religion." The last provision is distinctly reminiscent of the suspicion aroused in the minds of K'ang Hsi, Yung Cheng and Ch'ien Lung. Anglican and Protestant workers wished to enjoy specific permission to carry on their work, and this the Imperial High Commissioner, Kiyng, obtained in the following year. "I do not understand the lines of distinction between the religious ceremonies of the various nations," remarked this tolerant Manchu statesman, "but virtuous Chinese will by no means be punished on account of their religion. No matter whether they worship images or do not worship images (Is it possible that Kiyng had been intolerantly misinformed to the effect that the Roman Catholics "worshipped images"?), there are no prohibitions against them if, when practising their creed, their conduct is good." And early in 1846 another imperial decree ordered the restoration of Church property which had been confiscated almost a century and a quarter earlier.

Although the Catholic missionaries had continued the propagation of the faith regardless of proscription and persecution, and in the year 1830 are estimated to have had as many as four bishops and nineteen European priests scattered over the empire even to Szechuen with two hundred thousand converts, it remains a fact that both Catholic and Protestant missionaries have been, by force of circumstance in the modern period, bound inextricably by connection with foreign interests of a not purely religious nature which interests have themselves been divided along national lines. The connection of Christianity with foreign personnel, foreign rights and interests, and foreign governments at the present day have aroused criticism on the part of the Chinese, and resulted in considerable heart-searching on the part of missionaries. Many thoughtful Christians, native

*Art. 17 of the American treaty of Wanghia signed almost six months earlier, had permitted the building of Churches in the open ports, but this treaty did not provide a right for missionaries to seek converts.

and foreign, are of the opinion that the present moment is fully as critical in the history of Christianity in China as any of those touched upon hitherto.

Once they were aroused to the opportunities and needs of the China field, Protestant and Anglican missionaries were as determined to break down barriers which kept them from the interior as had been their Roman Catholic brethren in earlier centuries; they were, moreover, quite as much inclined to act on the principle that the end justifies the means as had been Pere Ricci and those who had followed in his footsteps, when it came to the use of subterfuge in entering the country.

Into the details of the connections which have existed between foreign and Chinese Christian workers and converts on the one side, and non-religious foreign interests and rights of all classes on the other there is no space here to enter. The sources and material for the study of the various aspects of these matters are well known. Suffice it to say that the part played by extraterritoriality, the special toleration clauses in the treaties, the protection which must be accorded, under modern conceptions of government, to nationals engaged abroad in religious or any other kind of legitimate work by the governments of their home lands; the special claims of France and Germany to protect Catholic missionaries and their property in the Far East, and the advantage taken of this on several occasions to assume the offensive in military operations or to claim indemnities—all these have lent color to the suspicion felt by many Chinese high and low, since the days of K'ang Hsi, that missionaries, regardless of the good they do along social and educational lines, are in reality subtle and effective agents of imperialism. This suspicion was considerably enhanced by Articles Two and Seven of Group V. of the Twenty-One Demands of January 18, 1915. These articles demanded that "Japanese hospitals, churches and schools in the interior of China shall be granted the right of owning land," and that "China agrees that Japanese subjects shall have the right of missionary propaganda (or, of propagating Buddhism) in China." Considering the position held in Japan by Shintoism and the fact that it was by way of China that Buddhism entered Japan, the Chinese may be pardoned for being suspicious of Japan's motives in desiring to propagate Buddhism in this country.

We as missionaries and friends of the Chinese people realize the error made by those who either falsely, or in sincerity of mind, accuse us of wittingly being the agents of our respective countries rather than of our God. It is not enough in a time like the present, however, for us merely to smile, or shrug our shoulders, or to become righteously indignant with the "stupid people." If we *are* true missionaries, and not merely the agents of our home governments, we must—unlike the "Master in Israel" who once consulted Christ—be able to read the signs of the time. True, the wind bloweth where it listeth—but it is our task to note the direction from which it blows.

The study of the critical moments in the history of Christianity in this great country which have been touched on here may serve to indicate certain weaknesses *not in Christianity itself but in the methods used by those who have been its messengers*. Whatever good the early and later Assyrian Christians may have done, and certainly it was not small, and whatever mistakes they may have made, that of compromising the purity of Christianity by bringing in alien elements from other religions can with difficulty be forgiven. Christianity as a religion is, if it is anything, absolutely *unique*—and uniqueness and eclecticism are mutually contradictory and destructive. Assyrian Christianity by its compromises became the salt which had lost its savor; it almost literally—as far as the East is concerned—gained the world, but lost its soul.

In the days of Archbishop John of Monte Corvino, Catholic Christianity had not sufficient contact with nor support from the Mother Church in Rome. The numbers of workers who could be spared and who dared brave the terrors of travel to Cathay and the hardships to be endured after arrival were few, and, apparently insofar as China was concerned, the error was made of developing a clientele, if such a term be admissible, upon too exclusively foreign a basis. Is there not a lesson for us at present to be derived from consideration of this point? In the minds of too many who contribute financially for Christian work in China there is the idea that Christianity and foreign clothes, architecture, learning, and customs are synonymous. Consider for instance the surpassing foreign-ness of much of the Christian Church and Mission architecture in China at present.

The great work of the Jesuits was wrecked on the shoals of internal dissension on a question of vital importance the solution of which was attempted in the worst possible way, and by international and to all intents and purposes inter-denominational rivalry. Is there no lesson for us to learn from this fatal ending to a great and good work? It would appear that denominational quarrels and rivalry, both internal and external, have not yet passed away, and it is a moot question as to whether certain quarrels between Fundamentalists and Modernists so-called may not eventually have an effect on Christianity in China of the twentieth century similar to that which the Rites Controversy had in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If the Chinese of the present day are less confused by national and denominational differences than they were in the days of the emperor K'ang Hsi and the High Commissioner Kiying, they are certainly not inclined to be bound by them as is witnessed by the ease and frequency with which they overstep the boundaries of the particular religious group among which they may have been educated and earliest employed.

To remark that Christianity is essentially *spiritual* and that it is a way or system of life is, of course, to remark the obvious:

nevertheless it is the obvious that we are often most prone to overlook and slowest to comprehend and apply in practice. Christianity in modern China has become highly organized; if spiritual depth and organic efficiency can be combined it is well, but the question may be considered as to whether this is the case. The present day tendency toward extreme organization seems often to lead rather to the growth of a system of Churchianity than to the living of Christianity. If, by force of circumstance, foreign Christian workers and foreign support were to be withdrawn from this country, as has happened in times past when Christianity was almost as well developed as it is at present, would the Faith survive? A sometime missionary writing on the subject of the "Luminous Religion" not long ago remarks"—one thing is certain: the God of the Christians does not work miracles to keep Christianity alive wherever it has once been planted; the history of Arabia, of North Africa of Palestine itself, as well as of China, proves this. If in 1900, China had been as strong relatively to the Western Powers as she was under the T'angs or even under the Mings, in all probability Christianity would have been wiped out once again. Would *that* have implied unworthiness on the part of the missionaries?

It is clear that if Christianity is to survive the critical moment of the present day it must do so because of the unselfish and wise attitude developed by all of its followers, foreign and native. The critical moments of the past show the need, nay the necessity, of purity of faith, unity of presentation, and dissociation with those elements which are essentially political and material instead of religious and spiritual. How these objects are to be attained and the present critical moment safely passed must require careful and patient study, much prayer meditation and cooperation. Only so can we avoid further shallows and miseries.